

# Nineteenth-Century Neighborhoods



## Elements of Nineteenth-Century Neighborhoods

- Grid of narrow, often cobbled, streets
- Small, neighborhood parks
- Wide brick or flagstone sidewalks
- Granite curbs and historic street lights
- Mature street trees in verges or tree grates
- A step up into the front yard from the sidewalk
- Houses in traditional architectural styles
- Narrow, deep lots with closely spaced houses
- Shallow, well landscaped front yards



Built in the era of tall ships and horse-drawn carriages, Norfolk's nineteenth-century neighborhoods surround Downtown. These neighborhoods feature narrow, often cobbled streets, brick sidewalks, and shallow front yards. A step or two up into the front yard helps to define the front yard as a public-private space just outside of the public right-of-way, while broad, stately porches welcome visitors. Neighborhood building patterns, landscaping and streetscaping work together to create comfortable, intimate neighborhoods.

## Lot Patterns

### LOT SIZES

Most lots are 30 to 60 feet wide and 100 to 120 feet deep. Corner lots may be 10 to 15 feet wider to allow wrapping porches and other architectural elements to face both streets.

### FRONT YARD SETBACK

In traditional neighborhoods, houses are set back a relatively uniform distance from the street. The minor fluctuations in building setback provide visual relief in the neighborhood and usually fall within a narrow range of 10 or 15 feet. This range is called the **Front Facade Zone**. In Norfolk's nineteenth-century neighborhoods, the main body of the house is set back up to 35 feet from the front property line depending on the character of the

street. Porches may extend up to 12 feet into the front yard. Bay windows may extend up to 3 feet into the front yard.

### SIDE YARD SETBACK

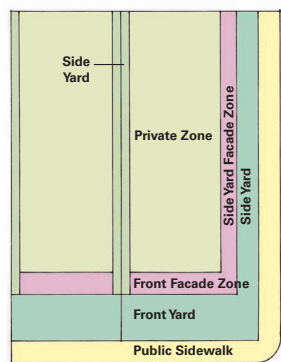
Side yard setbacks typically total no less than 6 feet between buildings. Driveways and carriage porches may require an additional 10 to 12 feet on one side of the house.

### SIDE STREET SETBACK

Houses on corner lots usually conform to the front yard setbacks of the adjacent houses on both streets.

### GARAGES & ANCILLARY STRUCTURES

Garages are located at the rear of the lot with a narrow 8- to 10-foot-wide driveway leading from the street. Individual "carriage" doors are a distinctive mark of



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- A Brambleton (Central and South)
- B Campostella
- C Freemason
- D Ghent
- E Hardy Field
- F Huntersville
- G Lambert's Point
- H Park Place



Ghent

Analysis drawing of a typical nineteenth-century house lot



the carriage house or garage. Doors are often of painted wood with window lights or a patterned wood panel design.

### Streetscape Character

#### STREETS

Nineteenth-century streets have a narrow cross section, usually 28 to 30 feet in width, with parallel parking on one or two sides. When parallel parking is provided on both sides of the street, a 'yield street' condition may result, providing a 12- to 16-foot drive aisle for two-way traffic between parked vehicles.

Narrow one-way streets may ring small parks or other public spaces. These narrow streets usually have parallel parking on one side and a total cross section of 16 to 20 feet.

#### CURBS

Curbs are 6 to 8 inches tall and may be made of granite or concrete. Old concrete curbs may incorporate a steel angle to protect the curb edge from deterioration.

#### VERGES & STREET TREES

Verges or tree lawns may range from 2 to 5 feet in width. Verges may be landscaped or hard-surfaced with brick or concrete. When hard-surfaced, verges have 3- to 5-foot square grates for street trees.

Street trees are generally spaced 25 to 30 feet on-center and are normally centered in the verge strip.

#### SIDEWALKS

Nineteenth-century neighborhoods frequently have sidewalks made of poured concrete, brick, or slate. Sidewalks are 4 to 8 feet wide.

### Landscape Character

#### LIGHTING

Since gas street lamps did not illuminate a large area, street lights were relatively short, 10 to 14 feet tall, and occurred every 25 to 30 feet. Street lamps were made of cast iron and often had exquisite detailing. Although gas is no longer used for street lighting, electric streetlights in these neighborhoods continue this design tradition. Many houses have period lighting flanking the front door mounted to the wall or a porch ceiling light as an accent.

#### FENCING & GARDEN WALLS

Fences and walls provide delineation between public and private space and are strongly recommended on corner lots and between houses. Garden walls may be built of brick, stone, wrought iron or wood. Fence and wall designs are related to the design and period of the house. Some examples of fences and walls are illustrated in the Landscape Patterns Sec-



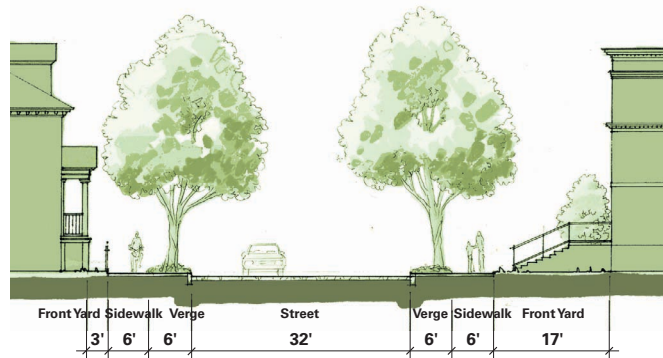
tion. Front yard fences are always low and relatively open to create a neighborly sense of place.

#### RETAINING WALLS & STEPS

Steps set in low retaining walls are often used to delineate public and semi-private realms. Retaining walls range from 12 to 18 inches tall and stairs never have more than three steps leading up to the yard. Low retaining walls are generally built of stone or brick capped with stone.

#### PLANTING

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the approach toward landscaping changed. In the early Victorian era, planting was confined to small gardens away from the building, and grass marched all the way up to the base of the house. Later, homeowners began ringing their houses with plants to give them a picturesque look. Hedges may be used along property lines to create an 'outside room.'



A typical street section in the Ghent neighborhood

